

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5617
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: SUCCESSOR UNCLEAR AS RABIN STEPS DOWN AS ALIGNMENT HEAD

1. RABIN'S SUDDEN ANNOUNCEMENT LATE LAST NIGHT THAT HE IS STEPPING DOWN AS THE ALIGNMENT'S CANDIDATE FOR PRIME MINISTER IN THE WAKE OF THE REVELATION OF HIS ILLEGAL U.S. BANK ACCOUNTS HAS PLACED THE LABOR PARTY IN A TIGHT BIND. THE PARTY MUST SUBMIT ITS KNESSET LIST BY APRIL 12 AND THERE IS DEEP DIVISION WITHIN THE ALIGNMENT OVER A SUCCESSOR. ALTHOUGH DEFENSE MINISTER PERES IS THE LEADING CONTENDER, THERE ARE ALREADY GRUMBLINGS FROM THE ALIGNMENT'S JUNIOR PARTNER, MAPAM, AND THE ACHDUT AVODAH FACTION OF THE LABOR PARTY. REPORTS SAY THAT MAPAM IS CONSIDERING PUSHING ABBA EBAN'S CANDIDACY WHILE ACHDUT AVODAH IS URGING FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON TO RUN. MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND RELIGION HAIM ZADOK ALSO IS A DARK HORSE POSSIBILITY.

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2. PERES IS REPORTEDLY IN CONFERENCE WITH EBAN THIS MORNING, AS WELL AS WITH OTHER SUPPORTERS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT TO FORESTALL OPPOSITION, PERES WILL OFFER ALLON THE DEFENSE PORFOLIO AND EBAN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. ALLON SUPPORTERS, HOWEVER, ARE URGING HIM TO MAKE A BID FOR THE PRIME

MINISTERSHIP. THEY ARGUE THAT EVEN IF UNSUCCESSFUL IN CHALLENGING PERES, HE WILL EMERGE AS THE UNDISPUTED NUMBER TWO MAN IN THE LABOR PARTY, WHEREAS IF HE DECLINES TO RUN, HIS POSITION IN THE PARTY WILL DEFINITELY SLIP.

3. THE LABOR PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE, WHICH HAD BEEN SCHEDULED EVEN BEFORE THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO MEET ON APRIL 10, IS EXPECTED TO PICK RABIN'S SUCCESSOR TO HEAD THE ALIGNMENT. HOWEVER, SOME PARTY LEADERS ARE INSISTING THAT THE PARTY'S CONSTITUTION, AS AMENDED AT THE FEBRUARY CONVENTION, REQUIRES CONVENING THE PARTY CONVENTION TO CHOOSE THE CANDIDATE FOR PRIME MINISTER. MEANWHILE, MAPAMANIKS ARE PASSING THE WORD THAT IF PERES IS SELECTED, MAPAM WILL LEAVE THE ALIGNMENT. THERE IS A REVIVAL OF SPECULATION THAT ACHDUT AVODAH WOULD ALSO BOLT OVER PERES' SELECTIN. SOME OBSERVERS FEEL THAT A RUMP LABOR PARTY UNDER PERES WOULD BE RIPE FOR SOME SORT OF TIE WITH THE LIKUD, CERTAINLY FOLLOWING THE ELECTION, BUT MAYBE EVEN BEFORE. INDEED, THERE ARE RUMORS THAT EVEN NOW PERES IS DISCUSSING THE SUBJECT WITH LIKUD LEADERS.

4. ASIDE FROM THE FACT THAT RABIN CANNOT RESIGN AS PRIME MINISTER--DEFINITELY NOT BEFORE THE MAY 17 ELECTION AND, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, NOT UNTIL A NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED AFTER THE ELECTION--HIS OPTIONS ARE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR.
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ACCORDING TO PRESS SPECULATION, HE MAY REMAIN PRIME MINISTER NOMINALLY BUT STEP ASIDE FOR ANOTHER CABINET MEMBER, PRESUMABLY ALLON WHO IS ALSO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, TO LEAD THE GOVERNMENT IN ACTUALITY. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT GOLDA MEIR IS SUPPORTING ALLON IN HIS BID FOR THE NUMBER ONE SPOT ON THE LIST, AS WELL AS SUPPORTING HIM TO BE ACTING PRIME MINISTER. HOWEVER, WE AGREE WITH A WELL-PLACED LABOR PARTY SOURCE (WHO HAD SUPPORTED RABIN AT THE CONVENTION) THAT PERES REMAINS THE ODDS-ON FAVORITE.
DUNNIGAN

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